UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2035
4 December 1995

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Government of Rwanda declines to extend mandate of UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda.

* European Union says New Agenda for Development of Africa in the 1990's reflects commitment of African countries and international community to promote sustainable development.

* Secretary-General calls for physical, social and cultural barriers to disabled persons to be broken.

* Secretary-General is in Cote d'Ivoire on final leg of visit to African states.

* Lebanon says peace in Middle East region hinges on Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and Syria.

* Religious tolerance is fundamental to human rights promotion, member States tell Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee.

* Sudanese Government eases ban on relief flights to the country.

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The Government of Rwanda has informed the Secretary-General that it does not agree to an extension of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), beyond its current mandate which expires Friday, 8 December. However, the Government has indicated that it would be receptive to a continued United Nations presence, provided its purpose was to assist Rwanda in reconstruction and rehabilitation, including the provision of technical expertise, financial assistance and equipment.

The United Nations could stay in the country without the Government's approval, a United Nations spokesman said. It was thus the Secretary-General's intention to initiate the draw down of the operation as of 8 December. It was estimated that the withdrawal process would take two to three months to complete. He said the Secretary-General felt that the United Nations still had a useful role to play in political efforts in Rwanda. Mr. Boutros-Ghali recommended that the Organization should maintain a political

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presence in Rwanda after the withdrawal of UNAMIR. A United Nations Office headed by a special representative could be established with a view to furthering the search for peace and stability through justice and reconciliation.

The Secretary-General suggested that the special representative would also continue to have overall authority for the coordination and expansion of the assistance that the United Nations and the international community were providing in support of Rwanda's reconstruction and rehabilitation effort, the spokesman said.

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The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990's reflects the commitment of both African countries and the international community to enhance the partnership that could promote sustainable development. This could be achieved through the implementation of reforms leading towards a participatory political system and a market-oriented economy, the representative of Spain told the General Assembly today as it began discussion on the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990's.

Ambassador Arturo Laclaustra, speaking on behalf of the European Union said the New Agenda provided a framework for national action, including that carried out by the international system in Africa's development of its economic, social and environmental dimensions, which must continue to be a main goal for the United Nations system.

The representative of Ethiopia, speaking on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) said the continuous marginalization of Africa from the Globalization of the world economy dictated that the partnership of Africa and the international community must now be strengthened to implement the objectives of the New Agenda.

Earlier today, the General Assembly authorized $115.4 million gross for the period 1 to 31 December for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO), the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) and the United Nations Peace Forces headquarters. In another action taken without a vote the Assembly authorized $10.6 million gross for the period 1 to 15 December for the United Nations Mission in Haiti.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has called for the physical, social and cultural barriers to the participation of disabled persons in society to be broken. In a message on the occasion of the third International Day of Disabled Persons, observed yesterday, Sunday, the Secretary-General

said that resolution of the problems of disabled persons must be part of an overall strategy of fresh economic and social policies.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said while there was today, a greater awareness, understanding and recognition of the needs, potential and capabilities of disabled persons, much more remained to be achieved. He stressed that the role of the United Nations was to play a catalytic role, to build a common understanding, a shared vision and consensus on the further actions that were required.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has arrived in Cote d'Ivoire on the last leg of his African tour. A United Nations spokesman said the Secretary-General will participate in an award ceremony honouring former United States President Jimmy Carter and King Juan Carlos of Spain.

From Cote d'Ivoire, the Secretary-General will go to Geneva for an expanded meeting with his senior aides on Yugoslavia.

On Saturday, the Secretary-General delivered an address at the opening of the Sixth Francophone Summit in Cotonou, Benin. On Sunday 3 December, the fourth day of his visit to Benin, Mr. Boutros-Ghali participated in a two-hour debate with the President of France, Jacques Chirac and the President of Benin, Nicephore Soglo. He also had meetings with the Presidents of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Mali as well as the Prime Ministers of Togo, Tunisia and Rwanda.

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Peace in the Middle East depended on Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and Syria, the representative of Lebanon has told the General Assembly. In a statement to the Assembly's debate on the situation in the Middle East, Samir Moubarak reaffirmed his country's commitment to the Middle East peace process. However, he said, for 17 years, Israel had refused to adhere to the 1978 Security Council resolution by ending its occupation of southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, three draft resolutions were introduced in the Assembly on the situation on the Middle East. Under the terms of one draft introduced by the Russian Federation, Norway and the United States, the Assembly would welcome the peace process and stress the need for rapid progress on the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. Another draft introduced by Morocco would have the Assembly determine that Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on Jerusalem was illegal and had no validity. And, under the third draft introduced by Egypt, the Assembly would demand that Israel withdraw from all the occupied areas of the Syrian Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967.

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The representative of Israel, Ambassador Gad Yaacobi said Syria and Lebanon should stop hesitating and understand that through negotiations, peace could be achieved. Syria and Lebanon needed peace as much as Israel and the rest of the Middle East, he said. Peace would allow them and the Israelis to invest in people instead of weapons, in security instead of war, in economy and development instead of confrontation. He said only through direct negotiations at the decision-making level, peace was achieved with Egypt and Jordan. That was also how understanding and agreements were achieved with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

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Religious tolerance was fundamental to the promotion of human rights. That was the view expressed by many member States during consideration of questions relating to human rights in the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural). The representative of Ireland told the Committee that protection and promotion of human rights was the first responsibility of governments. Governments must ensure that their constitutional and legal systems provide strong and enforceable guarantees of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of religion or belief, he said. These must include adequate remedies for cases where these rights were violated. But legal guarantees, although essential, were not in themselves sufficient, he continued. It was particularly important that restrictions or limitations on human rights be kept to a minimum.

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The Sudanese government has eased its ban on relief flights, according to a United Nations spokesman. The ban had been announced three weeks ago. Four Operation Lifeline Sudan flights to southern Sudan have been approved by the Sudanese authorities.

The Secretary-General on Sunday issued an appeal calling on all the parties to the conflict to take the necessary steps to allow access to innocent victims of the conflict under the agreed Operation Lifeline Sudan principle. Since 23 November, increased fighting in southern Sudan had severely hampered humanitarian relief operations. The Sudanese Government decisions to restrict relief flights into different locations within southern Sudan, had led to an effective cessation of relief operations and put at risk the safety of humanitarian workers. Over four million people benefitting from the United Nations-led relief operation, Operation Lifeline Sudan, were now increasingly vulnerable to disease and malnutrition.

In his statement, the Secretary-General had regretted the decision of the Sudanese Government.

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